



February 7, 2017

Oppose H.R. 634, the “Election Assistance Commission Termination Act”

The Honorable Gregg Harper, Chairman
Committee on House Administration
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Brady, Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harper and Ranking Member Brady:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 200 national advocacy organizations, we write to express our opposition to H.R. 634, the “Election Assistance Commission Termination Act.” This bill would eliminate one of our nation’s most important resources for ensuring fair, efficient, and accessible voting systems and practices. Only three months after an election in which numerous problems and conspiracies have been raised by a range of political interests, some based in fact and some otherwise, it is baffling that the Committee would attempt to shut down an agency that stands as a voice of reason and that has earned the respect of voters and election administrators alike.

The Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was created with bipartisan support following the 2000 election to address widely-recognized problems with our voting systems that created confusion, suppressed voter turnout, and fostered doubt about the fairness of outcomes. These problems included long lines at polling stations, outdated voting technology, and registration practices that prevented lawful voters from being heard. The EAC works in a bipartisan fashion to ensure better elections by conducting research, collecting data, and sharing information among elected officials, the public, and interested organizations. The EAC also oversees the distribution of federal funds that assist states and municipalities with election administration.

For several years, the EAC lacked a quorum because of vacancies among its commissioners, and was unable to perform its work. It had adopted its most recent voting system guidelines in 2005, which was too long ago to keep up with the rapid evolution of voting technology. Following the unanimous Senate confirmation of three commissioners in December 2014, however, a quorum was reestablished and the EAC was able to resume its work. Since then, it has voted to accredit a new voting system test laboratory, following a recommendation by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The laboratory will test new voting equipment against the voluntary voting system guidelines, which are themselves in need of attention. The EAC has also provided best practices on voting and election administration to countless jurisdictions around the country.

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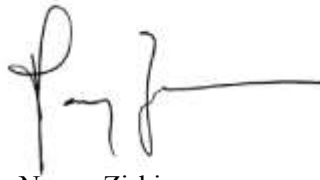
The EAC is an invaluable agency that serves a critical function in strengthening our democracy. It deserves strong bipartisan support so that it may continue in this role. For this reason, we urge you to reject H.R. 634.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If we can be of any further assistance, please contact either of us or Rob Randhava, Senior Counsel, at (202) 466-3311.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson
President & CEO



Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President